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ABSTRACT

The last in a series of reports from a project concerning mainstreaming handicapped students in vocational education programs presents results of interviews with orthopedically handicapped, hearing impaired, mildly retarded, emotionally handicapped, and visually impaired students; their parents; and special education teachers and counselors. Survey findings are discussed, and are said to indicate that a high percentage of the handicapped Ss were mainstreamed into the regular school curriculum, that all students expected to be employed at some point, and that both parents and students tended to be uninformed about vocational education offerings in the school district. (CL)

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HANDICAPPED LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

A REPORT ON STUDENT, PARENT, AND TEACHER INTERVIEWS

by

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In an effort to examine the problems in mainstreaming handicapped students into vocational education cluster programs it was deemed important to examine the attitudes and expectations of handicapped students and their parents. A questionnaire was developed to be used as a tool to interview selected pairs of students and parents.

The questionnaire was designed to allow students and parents to express themselves regarding their previous experiences with vocational education, current school programs, and career goals and expectations. Parents were interviewed by telephone and asked twelve questions; they were also asked to give permission for their child to be interviewed. The students were then interviewed individually in their schools, by arrangement with special education teachers and counselors.

The special education teachers and counselors were also interviewed to insure accuracy on some points regarding specific classes in which the students were enrolled and the type of work experience the students had. The teachers were also asked to indicate whether they felt that participation in a vocational education cluster program was appropriate for individual students and, if so, what type of help the student might need.

The pairs of students and parents to be interviewed were selected from each of five groups: the orthopedically handicapped, the deaf/hearing impaired, the mildly retarded, the emotionally handicapped, and the blind/visually impaired. Enrollment lists from the various programs serving Area III students and the physically handicapped programs provided the basis for selection. The survey included the following percentage of the total enrollment of each group:

Percentage of the Total Enrollment of Each Group				
Orthopedically Handicapped (OH)	Mildly Retarded (MR)	Emotionally Handicapped (EH)	Deaf/Hearing Impaired (D/HI)	Blind/ Vis. Imp. (B/VI)
75%	50%	70%	75%	100%

The percentage of students and parents to be interviewed from each category was determined by the degree of commonality among the members of a particular group and the size of the group. For instance, there seems to be greater commonality among the mildly retarded than among other groups, and less similarity among the deaf, orthopedically handicapped or the emotionally handicapped groups. The size of each group was a factor in determining the percentages as well. Since the blind/visually handicapped group had only 4 students, 100% of the group was chosen to be interviewed. One student in the visually handicapped group was also listed on the enrollment for the orthopedically handicapped, and since the student participated in the orthopedically handicapped program at Madison High School, that pair of questionnaires was recorded with that group.

The pairs of students and parents to be interviewed were chosen from the total population of the groups, using a table of random numbers, and not by individual school. The following table indicates the projected number of students that were to be interviewed, based on the percentages discussed earlier, and the actual number interviewed. Reasons why the interviews could not be completed with all the parents and students selected will be discussed later.

Projected Numbers of Pairs to be Interviewed
Compared to the Actual Numbers Interviewed

<u>Handicapping Condition</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Proj. #</u>	<u>Act. #</u>
Orthopedically Handicapped (OH)	Madison	17	17
Mildly Retarded (MR)	Grant	10	9
"	Cleveland	10	10
"	Washington	11	6
"	Franklin	9	9
Emotionally Handicapped (EH)	Grant	4	2
"	Cleveland	4	3
"	Washington	7	2
"	Franklin	8	6
"	Voc. Village	7	4
Deaf/Hearing Impaired (D/H ⁻)	Cleveland	6	6
"	Washington	5	5
"	Franklin	2	1
Blind/Visually Handicapped (B/VH)	Madison	1	1
"	Franklin	1	1
"	Grant	1	1

There were various reasons why all the interviews could not be completed as planned. In the mildly retarded group, 34 out of 40 sets of interviews were completed. Four of the group chosen were not available because the students had dropped out of school. In the case of the other two, there was no phone in either home, and we received no response to letters we sent. The largest number of uncompleted interviews was among the emotionally handicapped group, with 13 interviews not completed. Seven students had been dropped from the program for non-attendance; one had moved to another district; two students from Vocational Village had switched to evening programs and were receiving no special services; and three other students were placed in alternative

programs. In the physically handicapped program, one student had left school for a full time job.

In designing the survey procedures, we anticipated problems in communication with some groups of students. Since a large portion of the total population was mildly retarded, the student questions were simplified and worded in such a way as to be easily understood. Field testing the instrument helped to develop appropriate interviewing procedures. When we interviewed the deaf and hearing impaired population, a teacher from each of the schools agreed to be present to insure clear communication. The interviews with the students went well; the students were very cooperative and showed an interest in the purpose of the survey. Only two students declined to be interviewed.

The parents were contacted by phone and were quite willing to answer questions, and many had comments beyond those solicited regarding special education programs and the concerns they had about their children's future. Because of the overwhelming cooperation of the people interviewed, the whole process of the survey was a most enjoyable one.

The general focus of the survey was to learn the level of involvement of handicapped students in vocational education cluster programs, and 9th and 10th grade industrial arts, home economics and business courses. With the current emphasis on mainstreaming, questions arose about the number of handicapped learners already involved in classes in the regular high school program. How many in each handicapped group had been mainstreamed into regular education, and how did this number compare to the number mainstreamed into vocational education, industrial arts and home economics classes? For the purpose of drawing the information of the survey together into a usable form, we used the term mainstreamed to

refer to any student enrolled in at least one class in the regular high school curriculum.

Percentages of Handicapped Students Who Are Mainstreamed

<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
66%	90%	94%	100%	100%

To determine the number of students from the survey who were participating in vocational clusters or 9th and 10th grade industrial arts, home economics and business classes, we relied on information from teachers, since the accurate classification of each program was important.

Percentages of Students in Vocational Education Clusters or
Industrial Arts/Home Economics/Business

	<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
Voc. Ed.:	27%	6%	0%	38%	0%
9-10 Ind. Arts/Home: Ec./Bus.	27%	26%	22%	50%	0%

The three blind students interviewed in the survey were college bound and expressed no interest in vocational education. They tended to see it as contradictory to college preparation. The students in the deaf/hearing impaired program had the highest level of involvement in vocational education of any group. The counselors and work experience coordinators for the Regional Program for the Deaf seem to work very closely with their counterparts in vocational programs, and have helped to accomplish the relatively high deaf/hearing impaired participation in vocational education.

These percentages represent the actual number of handicapped students enrolled during this school year in the various types of vocational programs. Parents and students were both asked if they would choose participation in one of the cluster programs. The following figures reflect the percentage of each group that would choose one of the cluster programs if it were available.

Percentage of Parents and Students Who Would Choose Participation in a Cluster Program					
	<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
Parents:	83%	62%	85%	100%	0%
Students:	73%	67%	81%	87%	0%

Of those parents of children in the orthopedically handicapped, emotionally handicapped, deaf/hearing impaired, and blind/visually handicapped categories who would not choose a vocational program, many felt it was unnecessary or inappropriate because their children were planning on college or further training after high school. Among parents of mildly retarded students who did not choose a cluster program, many felt vocational education was out of reach for their children because of intellectual limitations and the level of math and reading skills required.

Teachers and special education counselors of handicapped students were also questioned regarding the number of their students they felt could successfully participate in vocational education cluster programs if they were available to the handicapped.

Percentage of Students for Whom Special Education Teachers and Counselors Feel Vocational Education Should be an Option					
	<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
	85%	68%	33%	77%	0%

The assessment of each student's potential for successful participation in the vocational education cluster programs by parents and special education teachers and counselors is quite close in the case of the orthopedically handicapped and mildly retarded students, and fairly close for the deaf/hearing impaired, but very different for the emotionally handicapped students.

Every student interviewed said he/she expected to be employed at some time in the future either after high school or after college. Even though all said they planned to work, a fairly high number of students had not formulated any definite plans regarding the type of employment. The following charts reflect the expectations of both parents and students regarding future levels of employment.

Percentages of Parents Predicting Various Levels of Future
Employment for Children

	<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
Unskilled/ Semi-Skilled	0 %	41%	8 %	0 %	0 %
Skilled	25	14	14	43	0
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	0	0	0	0	0
Attend College	30	0	0	29	100
No Definite Plans	45	41	78	28	0
Sheltered Employment	0	4	0	0	0

Percentages of Students Predicting Various Levels of Future
Employment

	<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
Unskilled/ Semi-Skilled	0%	48%	31%	0%	0%
Skilled	42	7	13	42	0
Technical	29	0	6	29	0
Professional	0	3	6	0	0
Attend College	29	3	13	29	100
Sheltered Employment	0	0	0	0	0

In contrast to the number of students expecting to be employed is the number of students who feel that the classes they are now taking are helping them to get ready for a job.

Percentages of Students Who Feel Classes They Are Now Taking
Are Preparing Them for Work

<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
50%	35%	84%	37%	100%

Among those students in the orthopedically handicapped and deaf/hearing impaired categories, who planned to go to college, there seemed to be a greater tendency to feel the classes they were taking were helpful in preparing for work. The higher percentage of students in the emotionally handicapped group indicating they felt their classes were preparing them for work seems, in part, to come from the fact that some were attending Vocational Village, and all those attending Cleveland were currently enrolled in a career awareness class.

Parents and students were also questioned about the number of students who had some type of job while in school. We also asked who had helped them find work, or if they had found jobs on their own. With the help of special education teachers and counselors, we attempted to classify the type of employment in the following way:

Percentages of Students Who Have Had Some Type of Employment While in School					
	<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
Special Education Work Experience	7%	83%	0%	0%	0%
Cooperative Work Experience	27	3	10	86	0
Manpower	0	10	10	14	0
Found Employment On Own	13	3	25	0	66 (2)
None	53	0	55	0	33 (1)

Fully 100% of the mildly retarded population and the deaf/hearing impaired had had some type of employment. The deaf/hearing impaired population indicated a high level of involvement in cooperative work experience. Within the mildly retarded group, many of the students were placed on work experience job sites without pay as part of a carefully planned program to earn credit toward graduation.

Parents were asked if they were familiar with vocational education cluster programs offered through the school district, and what the school had done to inform them about the cluster programs.

Percentage of Parents Who Were Familiar With Vocational Ed. Programs in the District				
<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
33%	10%	28%	42%	0%

Parents of students in visually handicapped programs expressed no real interest in vocational education clusters. They shared their children's aspirations for a college education.

Parents were also asked if the school had ever done anything to inform them of the vocational programs offered. The percentage of those who felt the school had informed them was identical to those who answered that they were familiar with programs in vocational education.

Percentage of Parents Who Felt the School Had Informed Them
About Vocational Education Cluster Programs

<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
33%	10%	28%	42%	0%

The percentage of students who are in cluster programs among the various handicapped groups seems to show some rough correspondence to the percentage of parents who were familiar with the cluster programs.

Students were asked if they could name a cluster program after being offered an explanation and an example. Students, like their parents, seemed to be largely unaware that such programs were available.

Percentage of Students Who Could Name One or More Vocational
Education Cluster Program(s)

<u>OH</u>	<u>MR</u>	<u>EH</u>	<u>D/HI</u>	<u>B/VI</u>
25%	14%	13%	38%	0%

Again, the three students from the blind/visually handicapped group preferred not to discuss vocational education offerings and did not respond to this question.

The students were asked to identify the school personnel who helped them choose the classes they would take and who talked to them about

future employment. The mildly retarded students identified their special education teachers as the people who helped them to plan their schedules, and the work experience coordinators and teachers as the people who talked to them about future employment. In the other groups, the students identified a counselor as the person who helped them with scheduling and talked to them about future employment. When questioned further, they indicated that the counselor was a special education teacher assigned to a particular program, but whose function was more that of a counselor than a classroom teacher. Only a few students identified a person on the school counseling staff as a person who was helpful to them in any significant way.

In summary, the findings of the survey indicate that a high percentage of the handicapped groups are mainstreamed into the regular school curriculum. This might mean participation in one class outside the special classroom or full integration into the regular program with some support from a special education counselor. Although 90% of the mildly retarded group are mainstreamed to some degree, only 6% are involved in the cluster programs. In the orthopedically handicapped group, 66% of the students are mainstreamed, and only 27% are involved in the cluster programs. The deaf/hearing impaired had the highest level of students mainstreamed - 100% and the highest level of students in cluster programs - 38%. The emotionally handicapped students had no involvement in the vocational education cluster programs, while 94% were mainstreamed. The age of the students explains this, since only three of the students interviewed were in the 11th or 12th grade and so were largely too young for inclusion in vocational cluster programs. The three students in the blind/visually handicapped program expressed no interest in vocational education because of plans to attend college.

Over 60% of parents and students in any of the handicapped groups, excluding the blind/visually handicapped group, would choose participation in one of the vocational education cluster programs. With the exception of the emotionally handicapped group, special education teachers and counselors felt some level of participation in the cluster programs was appropriate for most of the students interviewed.

All of the students interviewed expected to be employed at some point, either after high school or college, but many were uncertain as to the type or level of employment they might secure. Over 80% of the students in the emotionally handicapped program and blind/visually handicapped program felt that the classes they were taking would be helpful to them when seeking employment. Only 50% of the orthopedically handicapped, 27% of the deaf/hearing impaired, and 35% of the mildly retarded group felt the classes in which they were currently enrolled would be useful in the future. The classes that students most frequently identified as likely to be helpful in the future were career awareness or exploration classes, personal finance classes, typing or business education classes, or classes designed to improve reading or math skills.

In the deaf/hearing impaired and mildly retarded groups, all of the students had had some type of work experience or paid employment. Slightly more than 50% of the orthopedically handicapped and emotionally handicapped students had been employed. Perhaps fewer of the emotionally handicapped students had been involved in work experience or had been employed, because they tended to be the youngest of any group interviewed.

Parents and students alike tended to be largely uninformed about the vocational education offerings in the District. Parents said the school had done little, if anything, to let them know about vocational education.

Those parents who felt they had been informed generally indicated it was a special education teacher or special education counselor who had explained the programs to them.

Parents were generally pleased with their children's programs, and were supportive of what was being done by special education teachers and counselors. Some parents expressed genuine appreciation of the special education teachers of the mildly retarded group, and felt the teachers were concerned about their students and helpful to the parents. The interaction between parents and teachers seemed to be the greatest among the mildly retarded group. The parents of the emotionally handicapped group seemed to be the least familiar with the purpose and function of that program, but this was the first year these classrooms were in operation, and such parent unfamiliarity might be expected.

In summarizing the information from parents, students, and teachers, several recommendations might be made:

- 1) Schools should consider an intensified system for informing parents and students about available vocational education cluster programs.
- 2) There should be an Area-wide plan developed, for vocational education for handicapped students, that would include increased participation by the handicapped in vocational education cluster programs.
- 3) Schools should encourage handicapped students to draw on the services of the school counseling staff as well as the special education staff.
- 4) I.E.P's should be developed to enable the handicapped student to define clear career goals earlier in his/her high school experience so that greater use of existing services can be made.

5) Since preparation for future employment is of major importance to handicapped students, classes within special education, vocational education, and the regular curriculum should be encouraged to meet this need.

6) Plans should be made to increase the orthopedically handicapped and emotionally handicapped students' participation in the special education and vocational education work experience programs.